SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 1223 07805 8568

Francisco

Art Commission

Claire N. Isaacs
DIRECTOR

Memorandum

DATE: April 7, 1986

TO: The Honorable Members of the Arts Commission

FROM: Jill Manton, Coordinator, Art in Public Places

RE: Civic Center Design Guidelines and Phasing Priorities

At the request of Commissioner Vedensky, I am distributing these guidelines for your review. As you will note, they been reviewed and slightly modified by the Park Department. The Recreation and Park also passed a resolution approving the

se review these guidelines carefully so that ted upon before the full Commission at the n meeting in May.

me if you have any questions.

5/S

San Francisco Public Library

Government Information Center
San Francisco Public Library
100 Larkin Street, 5th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94102

REFERENCE BOOK

Not to be taken from the Library

D
REF
711.551
C4991

45 HYDE STREET - ROOM 319

SAN FRANCISCO, 94102

City and County of San Francisco

Art Commission

Claire N. Isaacs
DIRECTOR

Memorandum

DATE: April 7, 1986

TO: The Honorable Members of the Arts Commission

FROM: Jill Manton, Coordinator, Art in Public Places

RE: Civic Center Design Guidelines and Phasing Priorities

At the request of Commissioner Vedensky, I am distributing these guidelines for your review. As you will note, they have recently been reviewed and slightly modified by the Recreation and Park Department. The Recreation and Park Department has also passed a resolution approving the guidelines.

Would you please review these guidelines carefully so that they may be voted upon before the full Commission at the next Commission meeting in May.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

(415) 558-3463

45 HYDE STREET - ROOM 319

SAN FRANCISCO, 94102

3 1223 07805 8568

Approved March 6, 1986

March 13, 1986

TO: RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSION

FROM: DEBORAH LEARNER

RE: RESOLUTION ADOPTING DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR THE COMPLETION OF THE SAN FRANCISCO CIVIC CENTER PLAZA

The resolution below is intended to establish design guidelines for the rehabilitation of the San Francisco Civic Center Plaza. The resolution is based on design guidelines drafted by the Civic Center Redesign Committee. Their draft guidelines and accompanying maps are attached for your reference.

The resolution focuses upon the James Rolph Plaza, that portion of the Civic Center under the jurisdiction of the Recreation and Park Commission. In addition to the resolution detailing specific guidelines for James Rolph Plaza, the Commission may also wish to adopt a general resolution supporting the completion of the Civic Center in accordance with the original design concept.

Resolution adopting design guidelines for the San Francisco Civic Center Plaza

Whereas, the Recreation and Park Commission has jurisdiction of the James Rolph Plaza also known as Civic Center Plaza, and;

Whereas, the restoration and rehabilitation of the Civic Center Plaza and the entire Civic Center is of utmost concern to the Recreation and Park Commission; and

Whereas, a Civic Center design panel has proposed a set of design guidelines for the completion of the San Francisco Civic Center, and these guideline have been reviewed and considered by the Recreation and Park Commission,

Now, therefore be it resolved, that the following policies for the completion of the James Rolph Civic Center Plaza be adopted.

1. Restore the James Rolfe Plaza to its orignial design configuration with modifications of detail features to improve the livability of public recreational spaces.

2. Coordinate necessary improvements with long range plans for the restoration of the original design concept and avoid improvements that will impede restoration.

3. Remove or minimize visual obstructions to the cross axis, including trees and planting beds. While reducing the height of the garage elevator housing may be desirable, this may not be feasible and should be considered a long term goal, if not deleted from the redesign plan altogether.

4. Replace the corner bosks of olive trees with a perimeter ring of trees. Trees should be low and open enough to minimize screening of the framing buildings.

5. The design of the new plaza should be organized around the visual axis pattern used in the original design plus additional axis radiating from the twin fountains to the corners of the Square.

6. Design seating for the convival grouping of people and for wind protection.

7. Use minor changes in grade to create a comfortable sense of containment in the peripheral sitting areas, provide some wind protection and to enhance the definition of the major open spaces. These grade changes should not obscure views across the plaza necessary for public safety and enjoyment of the overall space.

8. Replace the center reflecting pool with fountains flanking the central concourse space. The design and placement of the fountains shall be as in the original design.

9. Modify the perimeter curb alignment to correct the pedestrian safety problems at the corners and reinstate the original circular intersection pattern. Extend the curb near major axis lines to prevent parked cars from blocking views. Delete the balustrade feature suggested in the Civic Center Redesign Committee's guidelines.

10. Provide for the easy installation of temporary security fencing and kiosks for special events in the plaza.

11. Construct a new paving surface appropriate to the Plaza's formal design providing safety and comfort for all including those wearing high heels.

12. Design a night lighting system for visitor safety and security in keeping with the long range design scheme for the Plaza

13. Possible shadow impacts of buildings that will surround the plaza should be carefully evaluated and alternatives considered in accordance with the Shadow Ordinance and long range guidelines established for the improvement of the Civic Center.

And be it further resolved that future improvements follow the suggested phasing plan outlined below:

1. Correct the subsidence problem and install new paving around perimeter. The existing paving surface will be difficult to match and is not altogether suitable to the Plaza's formal design. Rebuild perimeter sidewalk with new curb alignment.

2. Install nightlighting pylons and new perimeter lighting standards. Improved utility hookups useful in staging large events might also be installed at this time.

3. Remove bosks of olive trees and replace with perimeter planting. Add new park seating within new tree planting. The landscape scheme should give definition to the overall space, channel pedestrian circulation, create elevation changes with the use of raised planting beds and define the position of the twin fountains which might be inserted at a later date.

   The placement of street furniture and wind protection should be integral to the landscape design. Surveillance and public safety are important design considerations. The preferred approach is the placement of trees, raised planting beds or berming to afford wind protection rather than constructed screens.

4. Reconstruct original fountains and remove central fountain. The construction of these notable landscape features might well be financed by a private donation.

5. Complete plaza paving and seating. Food service should be available during peak use periods, lunch time primarily. This could be accomplished by licensing vendors with attractive portable units. It would be desirable if eating areas were defined with tables and chairs. These however would have to be moved from the site on a daily basis by the licensed vendor.

11d

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2014

https://archive.org/details/civiccenterdesig1986sanf

DRAFT REVIEW

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR THE COMPLETION OF THE SAN FRANCISCO CIVIC CENTER

July 23, 1985

I. Complete the Civic Center in Accordance with the original design concept.

Fifty years have passed without action toward completion of the Civic Center. Four key sites remain largely vacant or inappropriately developed, detracting in a significant way from the clarity and strength of the architectural frame defining James Rolfe Plaza and the Fulton Concourse. The spatial form of James Rolfe Plaza remains poorly defined and the potential drama of the central axis unrealized. The development of these sites would facilitate the concentration of City functions now inefficiently dispersed in leased office space as well as help in completing one of the great civic centers in the nation. There are three additional sites where the scale and character of existing development detracts in a less serious but still significant way from the overall effect. Obtaining appropriate development on these secondary sites, while not as critical as the central sites, should not be neglected if the full potential of the design is to be realized.

1. Marshall Square

The largest and most critical of the four key sites is Marshall Square, now occupied by a small one story building and a parking lot. The original design calls for a building reflecting the height, mass and placement of the Public Library. A monumental building is needed in this location to form the southeast corner and complete the eastern wall of the plaza. Until this key building is completed the potential strength and drama of the Fulton Concourse can not be realized. The exposed service ramp to Brooks Hall should be relocated under the future building restoring the Fulton Concourse to its original balance. The southeast corner should be

curved symmetrically about the centerline of Eighth Street and the Pioneer Monument to provide an appropriate setting for the historic sculpture.

2. Northwest corner of Polk and McAllister

3. Northeast corner of Larkin and McAllister

4. Southeast corner of Grove and Larkin

These three corner sites are occupied respectively by a parking lot and former gas station building, the Civic Center steam plant occupying only a quarter of the site, and the rear end of a Market Street bank building flanked by two parking lots. The first two sites are City owned and the third is in private ownership. Of the four corner sites bracketing James Rolfe Plaza only the Health Building on the southwest corner of Polk and Grove has been completed along the lines of the original design concept. These corner buildings are particularly important to framing and defining the plaza space because of the larger than normal corner openings resulting from the propertyline setbacks of the major buildings. The original concept called for corner buildings with deep arcades and concave corners, a format that would provide the maximum spatial definition. The existing Health building only partially meets the original prescription and thus should not be followed too closely as a model. To achieve the desired spatial definition future buildings on the other corners should hold closer to the original design concept.

5. South side of Grove between Polk and Van Ness Avenue

The remainder of this block front from the Health Building at the corner of Polk and Grove to Van Ness lacks both the scale and architectural character to properly frame City Hall. The existing structures and vacant site should be replaced with an appropriate design matching the height of the Health Building and continuing important building lines. Space for the Art Commission gallery and other Commission functions should be included within the structure.

6. North side of McAllister between Polk and Van Ness Avenue

Between the attractive four story apartment building on the corner of Van Ness and Mc Allister and the six story office building at 450 McAllister are two short buildings that in both scale land appearance are inappropriate to the Civic Center. Replacement of these two small buildings with an architecturally compatible structure of a transitional height between that of 450 Mc Allister and the corner apartment building would reinforce the unity of the Civic Center form..

7. The south side of Market Street between Seventh and Eighth Streets

The great width of the intersecting streets makes spatial definition of United Nations Plaza difficult. Market Street is 120 feet wide, the Fulton Concourse is 140 feet wide and Leavenworth Street is almost 70 feet wide. Further, the plaza configuration effectively widens Market Street an additional 40 feet to Seventh Street. Under such circumstances a very strong frame is required to achieve a reasonble degree of spatial containment. This in turn requires both a unity of height and architectural character with the Civic Center. Excepting the Odd Fellows Hall at the corner of Seventh and Market the buildings along the south side of Market Street opposite the plaza are too low and architecturally inconsistant to provide the strength needed. The future replacements of these buildings should match the height and cornice line of the Odd Fellows Hall which is in close alignment with the cornice of the old Federal Building.

II <u>Insure that new construction within the Civic Center is harmonious with existing buildings and contributes to a unified overall composition.</u>

Only one building within the Civic Center is intended to be the center of attention by virtue of its unique form and location and that is City Hall. The other buildings, while they possess their individual identities are clearly intended to play supporting roles and to work with each other to a common effect. They are joined together by shared building lines and other architectural characteristics that together link them tightly

together forming a strong frame for the central spaces. Any new construction should share sufficient design linkages with the existing major buildings that any difference in style does not undermine or weaken the visual unity of the Civic Center.

New buildings must project a similar impression of strength and monumentality to effectively define the large central spaces that are the heart of the Civic Center. The color, depth and complexity of reveals, proportion of features and general composition, including shared building lines, should relate positively to the existing major buildings.

The original concept drawings should be referred to in evaluating proposed new buildings to the Civic Center.

III. Restore James Rolfe Plaza to its original design configuration with modifications of detail features to improve the livability of public recreational spaces.

James Rolfe Plaza serves as an outdoor stage for cultural events and civic ceremonies. It is the symbolic heart of the City and thus demands a form and character different from any other open space within the City. It is a place where concerts are performed, art exhibits staged, dignataries welcomed, educational programs presented, political rallies held, protestors assemble and historic events and personages honored. The plaza in front of City Hall is the final destination of the traditional parade route beginning at the Ferry Building, and it is open space for residents and workers in the area.

To serve these civic functions the character of the plaza space must reinforce the significance of the event. The original design accomplished this objective by making the center of the plaza a large open stage centered on the major axis leading to City Hall. Attention was focused upon the area in front of City Hall by converging lines from the Library and it's future flanking twin on the south side of Fulton Street defined by two fountains placed on those converging lines where they

intersect with the cross axis extending between the Auditorium and the State Office Building. The importance of the space was announced by its central location and the multiplicity of axial lines that activated the space. The one weakness of the plan was the inadequate provision of seating sheltered from the northwest winds that frequently sweep across the plaza.

The plaza that replaced the original design omitted all but the Fulton axis and made a linear central pool the focus of attention instead of a civic space. The pool and the flanking rows of trees effectively divide the plaza into three separate areas rather than a single unified space. Aside from its formal design deficiencies the layout fosters the domination of sectors of the park space by a few people, limiting its use by the general public.

Policies for the restoration of James Rolfe Plaza:

1. Coordinate necessary improvements with long range plans for the restoration of the original design concept and avoid improvements that will impede restoration.

2. Remove or minimize visual obstructions to the cross axis, including trees, planting beds and garage elevator housing. The blocking effect of the elevator housing for example, can be reduced by lowering the lobby floor to the roof of the parking garage (approx. 3+ feet) and reducing the height of the structure. Transforming the roof of the structure into a stage will further assist in making the lowered structure an acceptable presence.

3. Replace the corner bosks of olive trees with a perimeter ring of trees. Trees should be low and open enough to minimize screening of the framing buildings.

4. The design of the new plaza should be organized around the visual axis pattern used in the original design plus additional axis radiating

from the twin fountains to the corners of the Square. See the Design Axes Plan on page ___.

5. Design seating for the convivial grouping of people and for wind protection.

6. Use minor changes in grade to create a comfortable sense of containment in the peripheral sitting areas, provide some wind protection and to enhance the definition of the major open spaces. These grade changes should not obscure views across the plaza necessary for public safety and enjoyment of the overall space.

7. Replace the center reflecting pool with fountains flanking the central concourse space. The design and placement of the fountains shall be as in the original design.

8. Modify the perimeter curb alignment to correct the pedestrian safety problems at the corners and reinstate the original circular intersection pattern. Extend the curb near major axis lines to prevent parked cars from blocking views.

9. Provide for the easy installation of temporary security fencing and kiosks for special events in the plaza.

10. Include permanent food and beverage vending kiosks within the plaza to foster use of the plaza by a broad spectrum of people and to provide informal surveillance for public safety. The kiosks should be designed to minimize their visual presence and located so as to hide existing vent structures where possible. Use of kiosks by vendors are to be tied to strict performance criteria for the maintenace of the surrounding area.

11. Make it the long term goal to minimize the amount of curb parking on the streets framing the plaza. The presence of tightly packed rows of automobiles constitutes a major impediment to the appreciation of the grand civic space that has been created.

12. Reinstate a perimeter balustrade similar to the one that framed the Plaza in 1916 and defined the major points of access into the Plaza.

IV. Pioneer Monument, the only intact remnant of the pre-earthquake City Hall, located on the N.W. corner of Grove and Hyde was originally the centerpiece of Marshall Square, with ample room to mound earth up around it to cover its concrete foundations. When the Civic Center was rebuilt and the street system realigned, the extension of Hyde Street cut through the former Square and a portion of the granite surround that framed the statue with the result that the statue appears crowded into a corner and its foundations are exposed to view. To give the statue a setting appropriate to its historical significance it is proposed to make the statue and the circular granite surround a freestanding island, separate from the remainder of the block, returning the statue to a symmetrical dominant position analogous to its original setting.

V. <u>Complete the Fulton Concourse between Hyde and Larkin Streets.</u>

Completion of this section of the Fulton Concourse will finally unite U.N. Plaza with James Rolfe Plaza and significantly expand the amount of open space within the Civic Center. The design of this section should be coordinated with that of James Rolfe Plaza in arriving at a more sympathetic design approach for the Civic Center open spaces, rather than continuation of the design esthetic started in the U.N. Plaza section of the concourse

The design policies for this section of the Concourse are:

1. Relocate the service ramp to Brooks Hall under future construction on the Marshall Square site with access from Grove Street. This will eliminate both the unsightly serviceway from the formal approach to City Hall and the even more unattractive queing of trucks in the middle for Fulton Street waiting to use the ramp.

2. Visually strengthen the library podium, clarifying its role in the overall design partee, and place the future building on the opposite side

of the Concourse on a similar platform. The creation of flanking horizontal podiums or terraces along the Concourse will dramatize the gradient and the opening out to the central plaza space. Instead of taking the form of a retaining wall, as is now the case, the podium should be transformed into useful seating and steps that could also serve as built-in bleachers during civic events. Extending the podium beyond the treeline will increase its usefulnessin this regard and clarify the design composition. Shape seating to minimize wind problems and increase usability. Public functions, such as expansion of the Library, could be located within the podium, if desired. Locate light standards on the podium rather than along the street grade.

Two minor axis, starting at the twin fountains in James Rolfe Plaza and running parallel to the primary Fulton axis, together with a minor cross axis marked by the side door of the Library determine the organization of features upon the terraces. A tree lined walk leading to one of the fountains would be a primary feature on each side.

VI. <u>Provide a strong central focus within United Nations Plaza that will dramatize and help define the Plaza Space.</u>

The spatial problems of United Nations Plaza can be greatly improved and the positive qualities of the place enhanced through the provision of a strong organizing focal point and space defining element. Neither the irregular black obelisk nor the two flagpoles flanking the beginning of the concourse have the presence to provide the qualities needed, instead the effect is random in nature with no one element strong enough to give form and order to the space. Replacing the two flagpoles with a pair of sculptures mounted on high monumental bases is an example of an action that would forcefully announce the beginning of the ceremonial way and has the virtue of defining the design axis without blocking it, which any centrally located feature would do. Because the design issues within U.N. Plaza are subtle and complex a carefull study to determine the precise perameters of the design that will best solve the spatial problems should be made.

VII. Modify the portion of the Fulton Concourse between Market Street and Hyde to bring the design into greater harmony with other portions of the Civic Center.

High wind levels have proven a serious problem affecting both the usability and appearance of this portion of the Concourse. The benches are under utilized and the rows of trees have been disfigured by the wind. The granite light standards that looked elegant in drawings and on models, as built appear cold and overbearing. This section of the Concourse should eventually be modified to provide needed wind protection and to bring the character into greater harmony with the eventual restoration of James Rolfe Plaza and the Larkin-Hyde section of the Concourse. The introduction of extended terraces similar to those in the Larkin-Hyde section of the concourse would help provide needed wind protection as well as aid in clarifying the space and form of the Plaza. Design studies for the improvement of this area should be an integral part of design work on James Rolfe Plaza and the mid-section of the Fulton concourse.

VIII. Give that portion of Van Ness Avenue between City Hall and the War Memorial a special character identifying it with the Civic Center and distinguishing it from the remainder of the Avenue.

With the completion of Davies Hall and the new State Office Bulding the two block stretch of Van Ness between McAllister and Grove has assumed even greater significance as part of the Civic Center. The present landscaping of that segment serves more to divide the War Memorial from the Civic Center than to unite the two as was clearly intended in the earliest plans.

Design policies for Van Ness Avenue between Grove and McAllister:

1.
Remove the chain link fencing and existing landscaping and widen the median island to a more generous width by shifting the southbound lanes

to the west, eliminating the small amount of curb parking between the drop-off bays on that side of the street. Define the perimeter of the widened median with sculptural fence or bollards and chain to discourage random J-walking. Keep any plant materials low with the vertical emphasis upon decorative architectural features, such as fountains, obelisks, or other similar features, located upon the centerlines of the Opera House and Veterans Building.

2.

Install a mid-block signaled crosswalk from the Van Ness entrance of City Hall to the War Memorial Garden Court gate. Such a crosswalk not only reinforces the important visual axis but provides a convenient path to City Hall from parking to the west and facilitates access to the Museum of Modern Art and the Opera House.

3.

Coordinate the landscaping on both sides of Van Ness Avenue. The design objective should be to help contain and define the space of this two block section without obscuring the civic buildings that frame it.

IX. <u>Screen views of the Central Freeway from City Hall by planting tall trees in the space behind the Garden Court and formally terminating the view axis with a major sculpture along the lines proposed in the original design studies</u>.

The once long vista up Fulton Street from City Hall is now unattractively blocked by the awkward structure of the Central Freeway. The only possible solution to this problem is to close the vista at the west end of the War Memorial Garden Court. Early drawings of the Garden Court indicated a major sculpture at the west end. Such a sculpture would serve both to provide an appropriate termination of the vista and to state the memorial nature of the garden. Additional screening with tall growing columnar trees on either side and behind the sculpture would further hide the freeway and moderate some of the traffic noise from Franklin Street. There is adequate space behind the Garden Court for

both the turning requirements of trucks serving the Opera stagehouse, much if not all of the existing parking and both trees and sculpture.

X. <u>Place sculptures in accordance with the Master Plan for the location of sculptural work in the Civic Center and meeting the criteria of the Plan.</u>

Within a formal composition such as the Civic Center sculpture plays a very special role. It is used to enhance the spatial richness of areas, strengthen the line of visual axis, and formally terminate important view corridors. Whatever sculpture is called upon to do it does so does so within formal rules of composition. The breaking of these rules with positive results is possible only within extremely rare and exceptional circumstances where the breaking of the general rule occurs within a carefully balanced composition that is formal in itself. The following criteria should apply to the approval of any sculpture to be located in the Civic Center:

1. All permanent installations of sculpture within the Civic Center should be in harmony with the spirit and character of the Beaux Arts arts and architecture. The theme should be in accord with the symbolic importance of the immediate area; the size, form and placement must serve the design role required of the overall composition; and traditional materials and techniques should be used.

2. No permanent installation of sculpture shall be made at locations other than those designated for permement sculpture.

3. All other installations of sculpture shall be temporary in nature, subject to a time limit to be set by the Art Commission, generally not to exceed ~~two~~ five years duration..

4. The installation of permanent sculpture within the Civic Center shall be limited to the following locations:

a. North side of Grove Street between Van Ness and Polk on the N.S. centerline of City Hall positioned in a similar manner to statue of Hall McAllister on the north side of City Hall. This is an appropriate location for sculpture commemorating an individual who played a significant role in San Francisco's history.

b. Behind the west gates of the War Memorial Garden centered upon the primary axis of City Hall. There is currently nothing to indicate that the Garden is in fact a Memorial Garden. A significant and fine sculpture commemorating the service of veterans in all wars would be appropriate here.

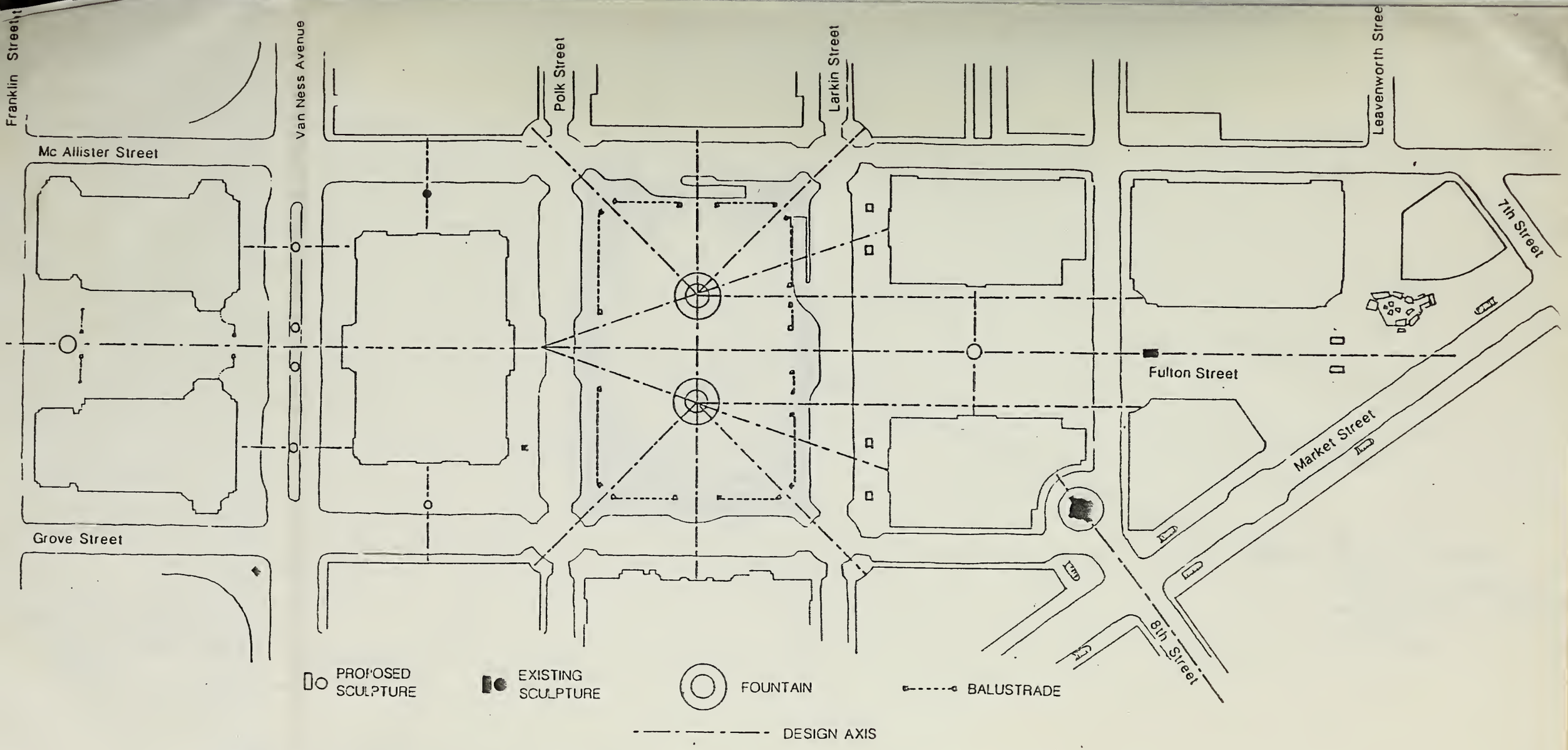
c. Sculptural/architectonic forms on the pedestrian island flanking the mid-block crossing of Van Ness Avenue to strengthen the definition of the axis and announce the crosswalk.

d. Two monumentally based sculptures announcing the beginning of the Fulton Concourse/Ceremonial way replacing the flagpoles in United Nations Plaza.

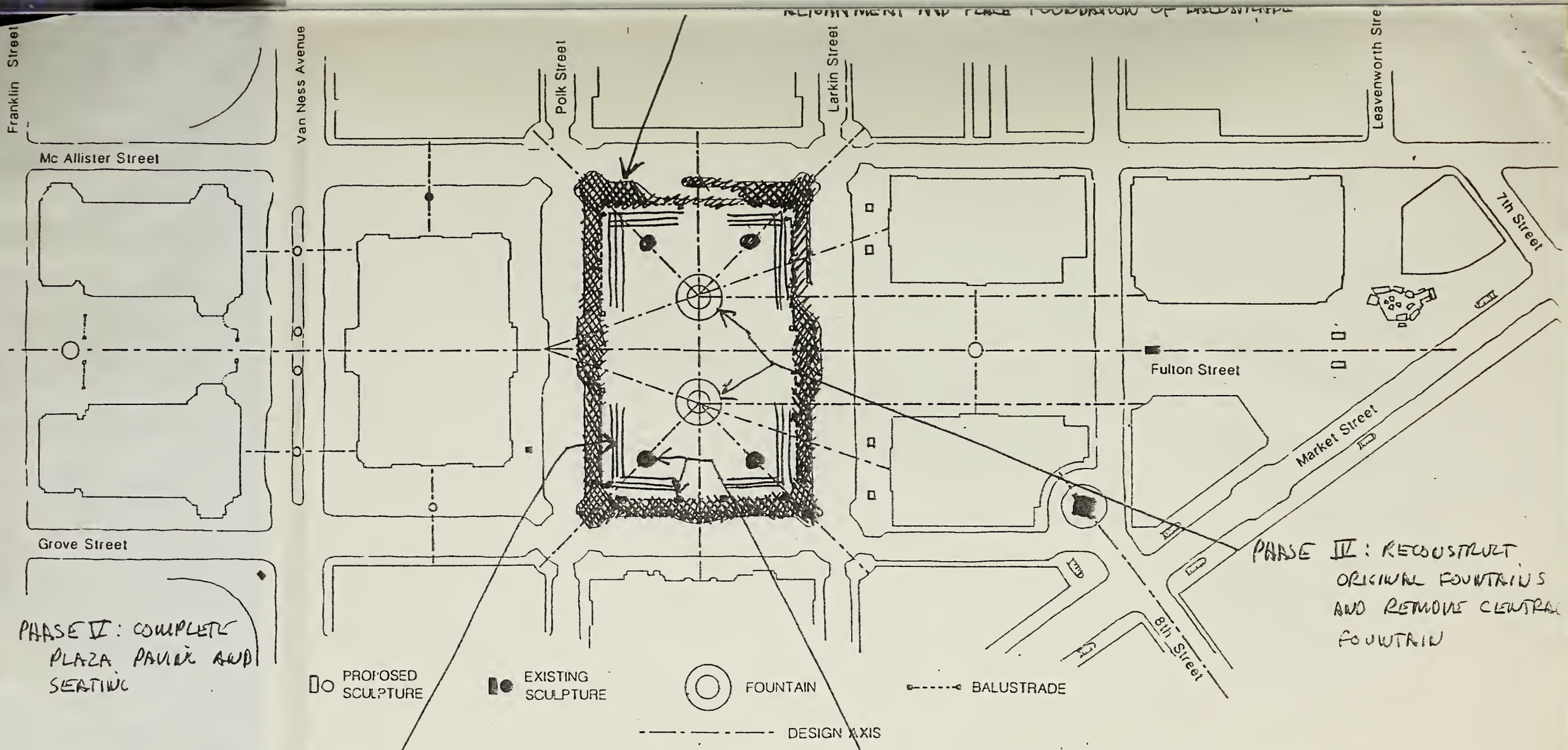
e. Low, small scale sculpture on the two vacant pedestals in front of the Library and a similar installation in front of the future building on Marshall Square site.

f. Between the Library and a future building upon the Marshall Square site, on the primary Fulton axis where intersected by the N.S. centerline of the Library.

RH:vr
6475B



PRINCIPLE DESIGN AXES AND APPROVED LOCATIONS FOR PERMANENT SCULPTURE



PRINCIPLE DESIGN AXES AND APPROVED LOCATIONS FOR PERMANENT SCULPTURE